

THE  
S K U L L;  
A  
P O E M.

INSCRIBED TO THE  
PRETTIEST WOMAN IN ENGLAND.

"Tho' once the Toast of all the Routs and Drums,  
"At last to this Complexion CHLOE comes!"

THE SECOND EDITION.

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*George Nichols fund*

*By George Crabbe*



*The*  
**SKULL,**  
*A True, but Melancholy Tale*  
*Inscrib'd*  
*To the Prettiest WOMAN,*  
*in*  
*England*



*"Tho' once the Toast of all the Routs and Drums  
At last to this Complexion Chloë comes."*





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TO THE  
PRETTIEST WOMAN IN ENGLAND.

MADAM, II

I AM much afraid I shall not be a welcome Visitor at your Dressing-Table, when I presume to interrupt you in the progress of collecting and improving your Charms, by presenting you with the SKULL of a Sister, who was once as handsome as yourself: but

*Shakespeare* has coarsely said before, although you paint an inch thick, to this Favour you must come at last. Though I cannot, Madam, be ranked with the Impertinents who croud your Levees, to offer incense and flattery to your Charms, yet I shall not accuse them of lavishing untruths, on the score of your Beauty: for, all who say you are handsome speak but fair; and while I declare the same, I gently admonish you to reflect, that those Beauties will soon decay, and the wearer of such natural and improved Charms, must make as ghastly a figure as the SKULL of the luckless LAURA! She, Madam, like yourself, was young, gay, sensible, and beautiful; but met a Lover, false, as yours may be, to win her heart, seduce her mind, deflower her chastity, and ruin her reputation. Alas! beautiful Lady, reflect on the loss of Reputation—the first, and richest jewel

of



of a Woman's treasure : and yours is so nicely and so critically situated, that it may be lost the very moment you are pausing to deliberate on its preservation. Let me, fair Lady, pull you by the sleeve again, to look on this breathless Sconce, which was what you are, as certain as it is what you will be. Few are the hours of the reign of Beauty ; improve the time to the advantage of your Fame : take one short Lesson from the fatal Page of this unhappy Sister's History, that you may live with honour to your Race, and die the favourite of Heaven, as well as the admiration of Man.

Must I, for this generous, this cautious Admonition, incur the warmth of your resentment ? Shall every Flatterer in the chrystal circle of your Charms be held in estimation, and I, the real friend of your present



present and future Happiness, be cashiered and discharged, as a vulgar Intruder on the company of a fine Lady?—If these are your sentiments, I forgive them; still hoping, while I hold the glass to your Follies for reflection, that you may, in one serious moment, if you ever have one, believe me,

Your True,

And Faithful Friend,

\* \* \* \*

May 19, 1783.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THE melancholy Story which makes up the following Leaves, and couched under the fictitious names of LEON and LAURA, is well known in Westminster, where the unfortunate persons lived : she the Daughter of a Tradesman, and he the Son of a worthy Gentleman. After her Seduction, she left her home : deserted by the World, she became poor and abandoned ; and following the Camp, at a Review in Hyde-Park, she broke a Limb, and was carried to St. George's Hospital, where an amputation was applied ; but she did not long survive the severity of the operation.—The Surgeon passing through the Wards of the Hospital, saw a breathless Coise, and struck with the symmetry and whiteness of the Teeth, he ordered the Head to be parted from the Body, and sent to his house ; where the SKULL was shewn to the curious of the Profession, as one of the first beauties in Anatomy. LEON saw it, and struck with admiration, enquired with uncommon zeal into the History of the unfortunate Person ; and to his poignant distress of mind, found himself the unhappy cause of the melancholy fate of an innocent and beautiful Maiden.

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“ if some relenting eye,  
“ Glance on the spot where LAURA's relics lie,  
“ Devotion's self shall steal a thought from Heaven ;  
“ One tender tear shall drop, and be forgiven.  
“ And sure, if Fate some future Bard shall join,  
“ In sad similitude of griefs to mine,  
“ Condemn'd whole years in absence to deplore,  
“ And image charms he must behold no more :  
“ Such, if there be who loves so long, so well,  
“ Let him this sad, this piteous Story tell ;  
“ The well-sung woes may sooth her pensive Ghost—  
“ He best can paint 'em, who can feel 'em most.”

# THE ARGUMENT

This argument, then, will be made up of the following points:  
1. The first point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
2. The second point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
3. The third point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
4. The fourth point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
5. The fifth point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
6. The sixth point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
7. The seventh point is that the world is not a perfect place.  
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S K U L L.

**SHALL** I, who long the giddy Round have trod  
Of sensual Joy, where reign'd the giddy God;  
Shall I his wanton charms resist, and turn  
From them and Mirth, to **MELANCHOLY'S** Urn?  
The sprightly Minstrel shall I yield to Woe,  
Nor follow Beauty on the frolick toe;  
But give to sorrow-suited **GRIEF** my hand,  
And walk with her a **PILGRIM** of the Land?

B

I strike

I strike the fail of Vanity and Joy,  
 Defy the Arrows of the am'rous Boy,\*  
 And make this sober Recantation known,  
 " I'm, modest MELANCHOLY, all thy own."

Some milder MUSE than her who sings the Foe,  
 Befriend the POET in this Tale of Woe:

Lead ME thro' groves of venerable yew,  
 Where DRUIDS study'd, and their Wisdom drew;  
 Where the mild rill of HELICON may stream,  
 And the chaste MUSE be plaintive as the theme.

\* Cupid was called by the Ancients, *Amor*, *Eros*, *Yoterna*, *Phaon*, *Eurpis*. *Cupiditas*, *Ardor*, *Amor*.—Shakespeare calls him, in his *Love's Labour Lost*, Regent of Love-themes, Lord of Folded arms, Dead Prince of Plackets, &c. &c.

And walk with her a PILGRIM of the Land;



To You, ye FAIR, this melting Tale is due,  
 The subject piteous, the misfortune new!  
 May ye have all her beauty, all her fame,  
 Bloom with her charms, and blush without her shame.

In that great Town where Spendthrifts rise to place,  
 Where \* hath virtue, \*\*\* hath grace;  
 \*\* hath loyalty, tho' some years since  
 He try'd his fortunes with a vagrant Prince;  
 But trim'd in time to shew his blaze of parts,  
 And priz'd more bad men's heads, than good men's hearts:  
 In that large City, where more Vice than Fame,  
 Extends with horreur her tremendous name;  
 Where knaves and fools of all degrees resort,  
 Where SIN, enthron'd with SATAN, makes her Court;

Where



Where **JEW**s, the vagrants of the world, repair,  
 And banish'd **JESUIT**s breathe a freer air;  
 Where base **ATTORNEYS** rise to power and place,  
 And smile regenerate with a blushing face;  
 Where a spring-tide of **LUXURY** bears down  
 At once, the **PEERS**, the **COMMONS**, and the **CROWN**;  
 Where the worst men are chosen from the throng,  
 To guide our **COUNCILS**, and direct us wrong!  
 Where **TRUTH** and **HONOUR** meet the Statesman's frown,  
 And Villains bear all titles but their own:—  
 Within this burnish'd grave of Sin and Death,  
 The lovely **LAURA** drew her roseate breath.  
 Of wealthy **Sires**, nor high descent she sings,  
 Nor draws her lineage down from **Gods** or **Kings**;  
 Blest in herself, crown'd with superior grace,  
 She seeks no **Parents** for so fair a face:

Her

Her manners artless, her affections pure,  
 Her beauty peerless, and her birth obscure.  
 For painter's pencils were such charms inspir'd,  
 By Grace enliven'd, and by Beauty fir'd !  
 So sweet a smile, and such a dimple sleek,  
 Ne'er curl'd on HELEN's mouth, or sat on HEBE's cheek.

'Twas low in WESTMINSTER our LAURA dwelt,  
 Where oft' the faithless LEON woo'd and knelt :  
 Nor hard the task, with such unequal parts,  
 One dress'd in innocence, one vers'd in arts—  
 In all those arts which lead to endless woe,  
 When Man is tempted to be Beauty's foe.

Such the Seducer, such his power and fame,  
 A very Student in the School of Shame !



By which false page the artless Maid he won,  
 And triumph'd o'er the mischief he had done.  
 For the fell dart of Lust is bearded so  
 With deadly poison, and so sure the blow,  
 That where it strikes, it fixes in the breast,  
 Exulting glories, and proclaims the pest!  
 Thus was our LAURA, tempted and betray'd,  
 A flowret left, to wither in the shade:  
 For the false LEON had enjoy'd the Fair,  
 Nor to her future fortunes lent a care.

Ye beauteous Maidens, would ye lend an ear  
 In early hours of life, nor scorn the Seer  
 Who tells from moral principles his tale—  
 While deck'd with Virtue, Beauty will avail:  
 It is the Maiden's armour, and defies  
 The monster LUST, which fascinates your eyes.

So



So have I seen, in far Atlantick clime,  
 The gaudy bird whiling away her time  
 In notes of innocence and musick too,  
 Careless of danger, for no foe she knew:  
 When from the variegated, flow'ry brake,  
 Waving in speckled pride, creeps forth the snake:  
 Lur'd by her melody, and charm'd to see  
 So fair a creature Minstrel of the Tree,  
 He moves the leaves, the bird she drops her song,  
 And casts her failing sight the ground along;  
 Where his bright burnish'd eyes meet mutual hers,  
 And fix'd they gaze, nor either creature stirs:  
 Giddy she turns, her foot forsakes the spray,  
 And fascinated falls the serpent's prey!  
 So our fond Mother, fatal tale to tell,  
 From Virtue swerv'd, and fix'd the human Hell!

And

And fore I ween, her hapless fate nor checks  
 The mad career, that ruins half her sex ;  
 Who basely plunge thro' ev'ry foul degree,  
 Though ruins damns both *Ligonier* and *Lee*.

That angel purity, that lustre new,  
 Which with sweet LAURA's years and beauty grew ;  
 That virgin whiteness which the Virtues boast,  
 That forms the Cherub, and creates the Toast.  
 A fairer child nor blest'd a mother's arms,  
 No Hermit saw her but admir'd her charms!  
 So Heaven, to suckle Kings did LUPA \* move,  
 Who, while they drew her milk, she fill'd with love :

\* *Acca Laurentia*, or Lupa, suckled Romulus and Remus, when given up to perish.



For one with so much grace and beauty blest,  
 Could not have drain'd a mean or common breast.  
 And shall these Virtues fade? Shall one rude hand,  
 Pluck this sweet Rose, the lustre of the land—  
 And leave succeeding ages cause to mourn,  
 As long as Grief shall weep, or Love shall burn?  
 Thus, some rude hand will range the gay parterre,  
 Where modest lillies blush, and sun-flow'rs stare;  
 Pass the tall vulgar plants, and gather those  
 The Gard'ner nurs'd, with loss of much repose:

When he has pillag'd all the flow'ry ground,  
 And all its beauteous sweets together bound,  
 The Coxcomb stares! and wonders why they fade;  
 And flings their drooping lustre to the shade.  
 So the pluck'd Posie, and the Maiden sweet,  
 Are but admir'd, and cast into the street!



Need and disease at once attack her charms,  
 And the base-born have access to her arms!  
 Stab'd by reflection, and with liquor mad,  
 Lewd with the lewdest—worst among the bad!  
 Abandon'd, thoughtless, frantick and forlorn!  
 To Camp, by miscreant Soldiers, she is torn:  
 And if in life, one miscreant is more great  
 Than an *Attorney*,\* let the Soldier be't.  
 Perfidious LEON! what infernal gust  
 Could stir the rage of so much savage lust—

\* There is nothing in this kingdom which wants so much curtailing, cleansing, wiping, and abolishing, as the knavish Tribe of Attornies. They are the wens, the blood-suckers of Society; the misle-toes of human vegetation, which feed on the sap of man; the blots of the Law, and the dishonour of human nature. The Legislature cannot exert itself so well, as by cleansing their Augean Stable: the work would be Herculean, but religiously meritorious! It is said London gorges twenty thousand of these Monsters, between Pall-Mall and London-Street!

*Hicce, oculis egomet vidi.*

TER. ADELPH.

That

That thou could'st, sober, cool, delib'rate, prove,  
 At once, the ruin of the purest Love?  
 Rob the chaste Case where all the Virtues shin'd,  
 Where VENUS gave a Form, and JOVE a Mind!  
 Leave her in tears, her fallen state to moan,  
 And weep, like NIOBE, herself to stone.

'Twas on a day, a brilliant, gay Review,  
 When Peers, thro' dust and ging'bread, roll from *Kew*;  
 When City Ladies scorn hot tanning suns,  
 To see their Monarch, and to hear his guns;  
 When Soldiers, stiff as hedge-stakes, upright stand,  
 And make us stare, how they obey command!  
 Like game-cocks clip'd, but not for war or fight,  
 But just to move, and make a martial fight!

Their



Their ears with powder fill'd, as well as guns,  
 And fierce to face all evils—but their Duns :  
 To please the little Princes of the Court,  
 And make for Peers and Pickpockets some sport.—  
 On such a Day, seduc'd by lust and whim,  
 The giddy, hapless LAURA broke her limb!  
 In all the pangs, the agonies of pain,  
 She to *St. George's* Hospital was ta'en :  
 An amputation was at once apply'd;  
 A fever follow'd—and the Wanton died!

Ah! wretched state, for fallen Beauty here!  
 Her bed, at once her cradle and her bier!  
 Plac'd in a miserable Ward of Woes,  
 Where Sin and Sickneſs are no longer foes;

But

But collegu'd, stalk in ghastly pride the room,  
 And sweep from ev'ry cheek its rosy bloom;  
 Proud to destroy, and emulous to tear  
 The wretch from life, in all the cloud of Care.  
 This was a victory DEATH could never name,  
 But the Fiend trembled both with joy and shame:  
 To him 'twas Fame! and FEVER, ever true,  
 Tied round his bony sconce a wreath of yew;  
 Which he in triumph, like a Victor, wore,  
 And on a label this sad Distich bore:  
 " Though once the Toast of all the Routs and Drums,  
 " At last, to this complexion CHLOE comes!"

Those eyes now clos'd, which lustre gave the spheres,  
 Drew from the hardest hearts, the truest tears:

The



The skilful Surgeon, as his rounds he took,  
 Cast on her pale, dead Corse, a mournful look—  
 'Twas PITY stop'd him! to devote a tear  
 Upon the fairest Sister's timeless bier.  
 Alas! tho' blanch'd the roses of her youth,  
 He saw the whitest Teeth adorn'd her mouth;  
 He turn'd—he pity'd so much Beauty dead,  
 But for the Teeth—sever'd the lovely Head!  
 In vain her brilliant Beauties fied and spoke,  
 To spare their Mistress this last tragick stroke.  
 So FLETCHER,\* brutal, insolent, and mean,  
 Smil'd on the Axe that butcher'd SCOTIA'S QUEEN!

\* Dr. Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough, at the unhallowed and unjust Execution of Mary Queen of Scots, behaved with an insolence and a brutality, that shocked her most inveterate foes, and even the vulgar spectators. When Men of the Church plunge into Politics, they too generally overact their parts: for, while he meant to insult the dying Queen, he insulted more the Religion he pretended to profess, and the wicked SOVEREIGN whom he meanly flattered. — STUART'S *Life of Mary Queen of Scots*.

The

The beauteous Head was cleans'd; and ev'ry eye  
That saw the SKULL, bestow'd the dead a sigh!

Among the rest, the faithless LEON came,  
For LEON to the Sciences had claim—  
The SKULL he gaz'd on! and the Teeth admir'd;  
Pictur'd her living charms, and them desir'd:  
With rapture dwelt upon her tempting mouth,  
And call'd on Heav'n, to give new breath, new youth!  
The Tyrian Artist thus his work survey'd,  
And wish'd in life the Form his skill had made.  
Jove with attention heard PIGMALION'S\* vow;  
Now shew'd his wrath on his high fronted brow.  
Could Gods, Creators of the Human Race,  
Behold the Spoiler of such perfect Grace,

\* Roi de Chypre, ayant fait une belle Statue, en devint amoureux,  
jusqu' au point de prier Venus de l'animer, afin qu'il en put faire sa femme.  
Il obtint l'effect de sa priere.



Nor shew their wrath; when Heaven itself design'd  
The Maid, an Angel pattern to Mankind?

Still fix'd, attentive, LEON stood, and prais'd,  
And grew the more impassion'd as he gaz'd;  
Zealous he draws the Story from the SEER,  
While horror upon horror strikes the ear!  
At last, unable to support the wound,  
He prays, he raves, he dashes on the ground!  
Confesses all the sin, his guilt, the crime;  
Reverts his thoughts to that unhallow'd time,  
And pious invokes the Gods, to spare  
The Man of Folly, and the Wretch of Care!

Ye Powers above, who rule the fate of Man,

Who shorten, or extend his vital span;

Who

Who give to Angels the poor Wretch in trust,  
 Raise his mean clay, or mix it with the dust;  
 Who help his reason, or pervert his mind,  
 Make him the First, or meanest of Mankind!  
 Who save him, sliding on a sea of ice,  
 On Folly's skaits, the sport of ev'ry Vice;  
 Who teach him Truth and Virtue to adore,  
 And, little less than Angel, make him more!  
 Who give him Confidence, and social Love,  
 And, above all, that Faith which Saints approve—  
 Snatch him from Earth, with lifted hands and eyes,  
 And make the Man a glory to the skies:  
 Hear the contrition of a suppliant Son,  
 Your mercy spare him, and your will be done!

Ye rural MAIDS, with artless manners blest'd,  
 In Linen, Lavender, and Virtue dress'd,

F

Attend



Attend with me this hapless FAIR-ONE's shrine;  
 And if you're mov'd with one impassion'd Line,  
 Sooth her poor Ghost with an unfeigned tear,  
 And from her fall, O learn to guard your Ear,  
 That Flattery's poison may not enter there,  
 And lead to ruin one as good and fair!  
 What heart's so hard, that won't some feeling show  
 To LEON's perjury, and LAURA's woe?  
 Learn from her melancholy, fatal end,  
 To shun the Flatterer, and approve the Friend:  
 And if the Story which your POET tells,  
 Touches the painted breasts of Modern Belles,  
 Well is he paid for all his time and care,  
 To save from Ruin one unthinking FAIR!

F I N I S.

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